

# Performance Evaluations and Performance-based Pay

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Office of Human Resources  
February 6, 2009

# CountyStat Principles

- **Require Data Driven Performance**
- **Promote Strategic Governance**
- **Increase Government Transparency**
- **Foster a Culture of Accountability**



# Agenda

- Welcome and introductions
- Purpose of evaluating the performance management system
- Overview of performance management in County government
- Ratings trends for Management Leadership Service (MLS) and General Salary Schedule (GSS) employees
- Explaining difference between personnel regulations and ratings distribution
- Suggested solutions by Department directors
- Moving forward
- Wrap-up



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# Purpose of Evaluating Performance Management System

## ■ Performance Evaluations in County Government

- Linked with CountyStat mission
- Trend in overall ratings for non-represented employees shows a consistently high performing workforce
- Disconnect exists between the ratings that employees receive and the guidance given from the Personnel Regulations

## ■ Compensation

- Merit-based pay is a key component of compensation structure for non-represented employees
- Intent is to motivate employees to exceed in the performance of their duties

## ■ Perception and Solutions

- Survey of Department Directors reveals candid and diverse feedback on the perception of the problem and what next steps should be taken

**By discussing the results of the performance management system in the context of its goals, the system can be refined and reevaluated to better align with those goals.**



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# **Overview of Performance Management in County Government**

## **Chronology of Performance Evaluations and Performance-based Pay**

- **1998: Establishment of Management Leadership Service (MLS)**
  - Performance-based pay regulation approved
  
- **2002: New rating category of “Highly Successful” added to performance evaluations**
  - Band III also added to MLS, doubling the size of MLS
  
- **2006: Performance-based pay Executive Regulation approved for General Salary Schedule (GSS) employees**
  - Performance/longevity increment established for GSS employees
  
- **2009: Fifth rating category of “Below Expectations” added to performance evaluations**



# Overview of Performance Management in County Government

## Employee Performance Evaluations

- Annual evaluations measure key results areas of employee performance
- Specifically, employees are evaluated on competencies tied to County performance measures
- Competencies are formulated into “expectations” for each employee
- In addition, each supervisor establishes “performance targets” or goals within a division or work unit for each employee

### **Competencies (*MLS Performance Planning and Evaluation Handbook*)**

- Appreciating diversity
- Works ethically
- Change management
- Communication
- Customer focus
- Expertise and knowledge
- Independence
- Interpersonal skills
- Personal accountability
- Productivity
- Problem-solving and decision-making
- Organizational awareness and commitment
- Originality
- Risk-taking
- Teamwork

**The employee performance rating is an overall assessment of competencies and achievement of performance targets.**





# Overview of Performance Management in County Government

## Performance Ratings for Employees as Defined in MCPR

- **Exceptional**
  - Consistently achieved additional, significant results beyond established targets; achieved higher level of quality than required; a role model in demonstration of competencies
  - “Performance at this level is rare. A supervisor must use this rating only if the employee performed at a higher level relative to most other employees performing comparable work.” (Section 11-7i(1)B)
- **Highly Successful**
  - Achieved all critical results at or beyond established targets; high level of quality; consistently and effectively demonstrated competencies
- **Successful**
  - Met the majority of results and demonstrated most competencies successfully; may occasionally exceed expectations
  - “This rating is appropriate for most employees.” (Section 11-7i(3)B)
- ***Below Expectations (New in FY09)***
  - *Met some job requirements but needs improvement in other job requirements listed in the performance plan*
  - *Employee may request that the supervisor provide the employee with a written work improvement plan*
- **Does Not Meet Expectations**
  - Employee has not met the basic requirements of the job; failing to produce one or more key results, demonstrating competencies infrequently or ineffectively; failure to perform assigned duties in a competent manner
  - Supervisor must meet with employee on what corrective action to take through Work Improvement Plan

**Beginning in FY09, a new rating category of “Below Expectations” is available to all County supervisors.**



# Overview of Performance Management in County Government

## Employee Performance Evaluations and the Connection to Pay (1 of 2)

### Performance-based Compensation

#### MLS Employees

- Compensation depends on performance rating, the employees' salary within pay band, and budget considerations.
- Monetary increase may be an addition to base salary and/or lump-sum award based on the following:

Rating	Employee < 90% of pay band	Employee at top of band
Exceptional	Addition to base salary and lump-sum award not to exceed 6%	Lump sum award - 4%
Highly Successful	Addition to base salary and lump-sum award - 4%	Lump sum award - 3%
Successful	Addition to base salary and lump-sum award - 3.5%	Lump sum award - 2%
Does not meet expectations	Not eligible for additional compensation	Not eligible for additional compensation



# Overview of Performance Management in County Government

## Employee Performance Evaluations and the Connection to Pay (2 of 2)

### Performance-based Compensation

#### General Salary Schedule (GSS) Employees

- Performance-based compensation occurs as a lump-sum bonus only and requires a performance rating within either of the top 2 rating categories:

Rating	Resulting Compensation
Exceptional	2% lump sum bonus
Highly Successful	1% lump sum bonus
Successful	Not eligible for additional compensation
Does not meet expectations	Not eligible for additional compensation. Work Improvement Plan is initiated.

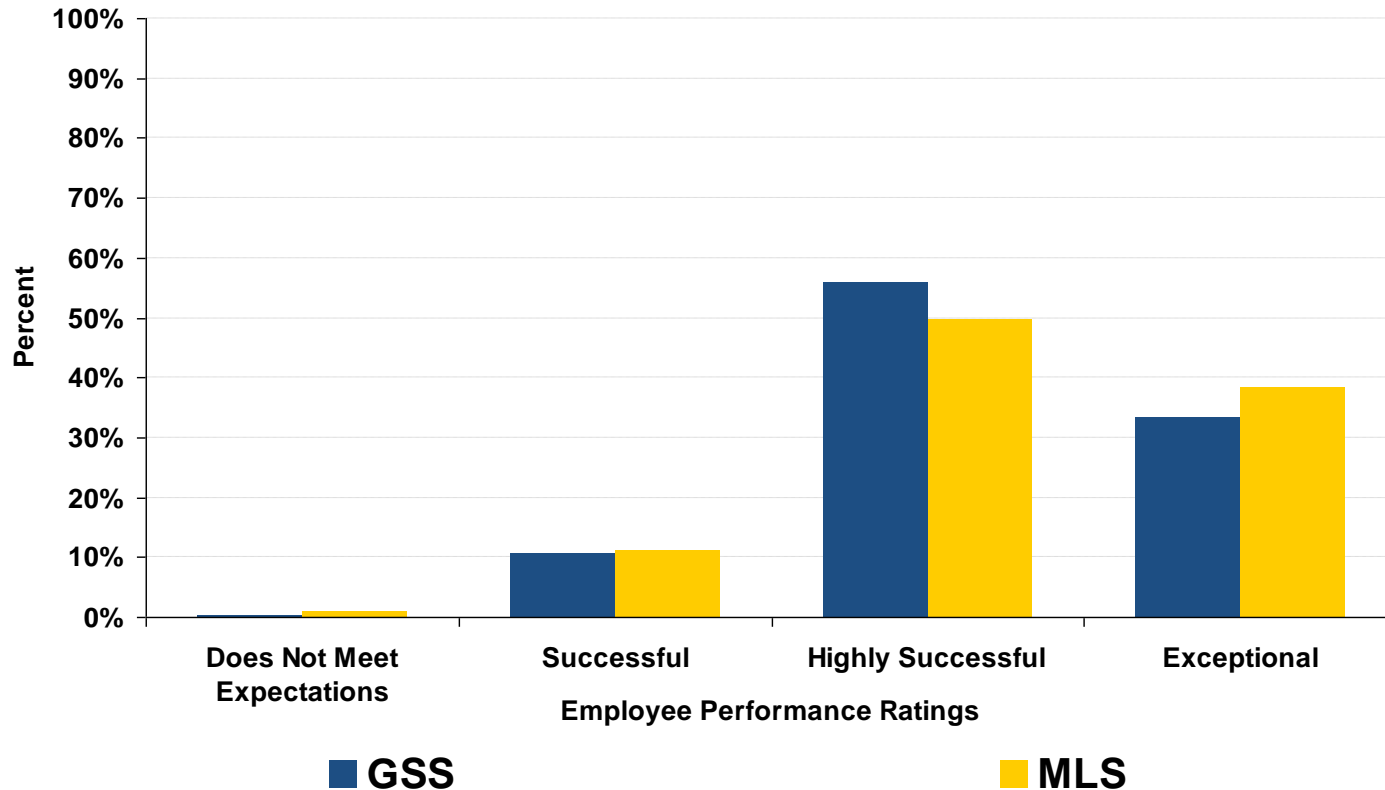


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## Overall Performance Ratings: MLS/GSS 2008



**Eighty-eight percent of MLS and 89% of GSS employees evaluated were placed in the top two performance rating categories.**

*Note: Data represented is the total records currently located in ePerform includes only records that were entered by each department and manager.*

*Source: Office of Human Resources, ePerform*



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## Performance Ratings for Employees as Defined in MCPR

### ▪ **Exceptional**

- Consistently achieved additional, significant results beyond established targets; achieved higher level of quality than required; a role model in demonstration of competencies
- **“Performance at this level is rare. A supervisor must use this rating only if the employee performed at a higher level relative to most other employees performing comparable work.” (Section 11-7i(1)B)**

### ▪ **Highly Successful**

- Achieved all critical results at or beyond established targets; high level of quality; consistently and effectively demonstrated competencies

### ▪ **Successful**

- Met the majority of results and demonstrated most competencies successfully; may occasionally exceed expectations
- **“This rating is appropriate for most employees.” (Section 11-7i(3)B)**

### ▪ ***Below Expectations (New in FY09)***

- *Met some job requirements but needs improvement in other job requirements listed in the performance plan; employee may request that the supervisor provide the employee with a written work improvement plan*

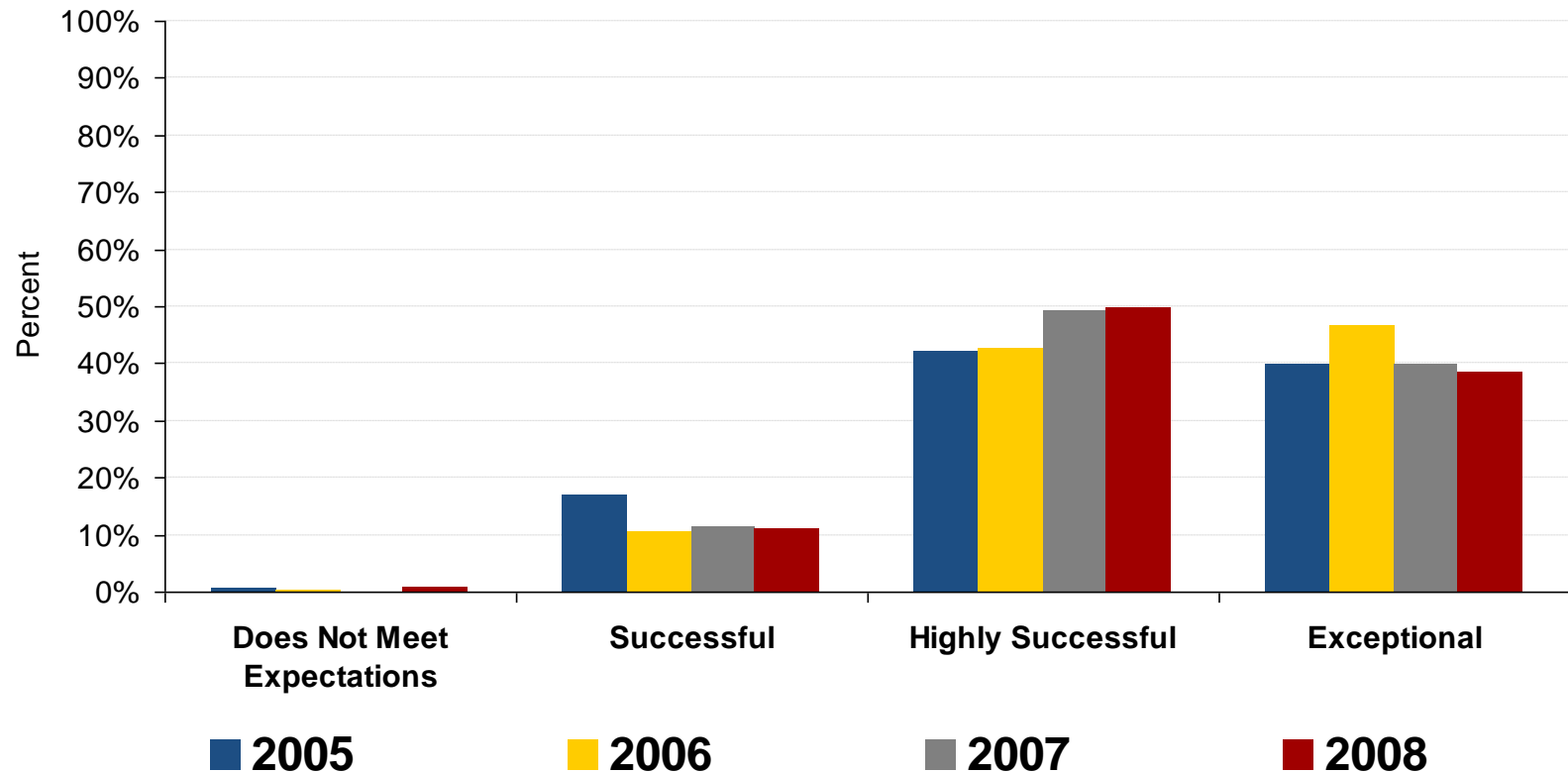
### ▪ **Does Not Meet Expectations**

- Employee has not met the basic requirements of the job; failing to produce one or more key results, demonstrating competencies infrequently or ineffectively; failure to perform assigned duties in a competent manner; supervisor must meet with employee on what corrective action to take through Work Improvement Plan

**According to personnel regulations, “Successful” is the appropriate rating for most employees, while “Exceptional” should be considered rare. This is not consistent with the current distribution of ratings.**



## Overall Ratings: Management Leadership Service Employees 2005-2008

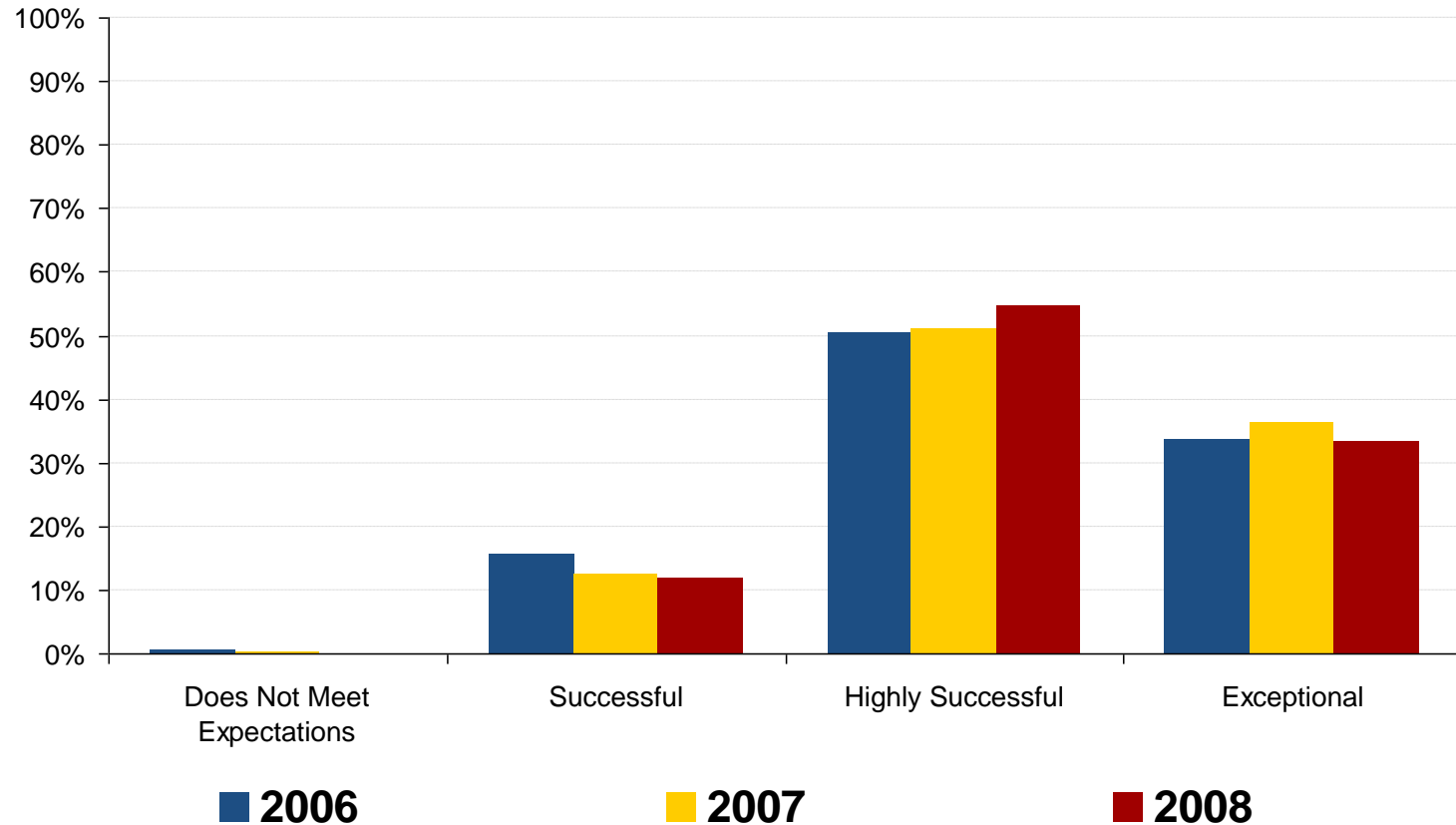


**Since 2005, the majority of MLS employees evaluated were consistently placed in the top two categories. Without MII included, the distribution for MI and MII is closer to 50% in each of the top two categories.**



Source: Office of Human Resources, ePerform

## Overall Ratings: General Salary Schedule Employees 2006-2008



**Similar to MLS employees, most evaluated GSS employees were placed in the top two ratings categories.**



Source: Office of Human Resources, ePerform



# Performance Ratings Distribution by Department: FY 2006 – FY 2008

Department	Overall Performance Rating			
	Does Not Meet Expect.	Successful	Highly Successful	Exceptional
<b>Permitting Services</b>	0%	0%	58%	42%
<b>Housing and Community Affairs</b>	0%	2%	51%	46%
<b>County Attorney</b>	0%	3%	50%	47%
<b>Regional Services Center</b>	3%	0%	57%	41%
<b>Fire and Rescue</b>	0%	3%	48%	49%
Economic Development	0%	7%	67%	27%
Sheriff's Office	0%	7%	33%	60%
General Services	1%	7%	51%	41%
Police	1%	7%	51%	41%
Environmental Protection	1%	8%	53%	39%
County Council	0%	9%	63%	28%
Finance	0%	11%	54%	34%
County 3-year Average	0%	13%	52%	35%

**Departments are sorted in descending order based on total percentage of ratings in the top 2 categories. The highlighted departments are those that were +/- 10% from the average.**



*Note: Figures may not total 100% due to rounding. Those departments with at least 15 total ratings are reflected here; those with less than that number are grouped into "Other Departments".*

# Performance Ratings Distribution by Department: FY 2006 – FY 2008

Department	Overall Performance Rating			
	Does Not Meet Expect.	Successful	Highly Successful	Exceptional
Transportation	0%	12%	47%	42%
Technology Services	0%	13%	58%	29%
Management and Budget	0%	13%	73%	15%
Health and Human Services	0%	13%	50%	37%
Corrections and Rehabilitation	1%	15%	41%	42%
County Executive's Office	2%	17%	38%	43%
Human Resources	0%	22%	57%	21%
<b>Public Libraries</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Liquor Control</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<i>Other Departments</i>	1%	13%	50%	36%
County 3-year Average	0%	13%	52%	35%

Departments are sorted in descending order based on total percentage of ratings in the top 2 categories. The highlighted departments are those that were +/- 10% from the average.



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## **Explaining difference between personnel regulations and ratings distribution**

- **To assess possible explanations for the distribution and potential solutions to explore, a survey was prepared that provided data on the employee performance ratings distribution and asked for a response to the following two questions**
  1. Given that a 'Successful' rating is appropriate for most employees and that an Exceptional rating for an employee should be rare, why do you think that the current distribution skews toward the top two performance ratings?
  2. How would you change the employee performance evaluation process for non-represented employees in order to better manage employee performance?
- **This survey was sent to all County department directors; 23 responses were received**

**Given the disconnect between the personnel regulations and ratings distribution, Department directors were queried about possible explanations and solutions.**



## Explaining difference between personnel regulations and ratings distribution

Given that a 'Successful' rating is appropriate for most employees and that an Exceptional rating for an employee should be rare, why do you think that the current distribution skews toward the top two performance ratings?

**In general, responses received could be categorized into one of four categories**

- A high percentage of high ratings is a function of the stability and quality of the workforce
- A successful rating is perceived as average performance and just doing what is strictly required by employee's job definition
- This is an interpersonal issue related to maintaining the manager-employee relationship
- This is a compensation issue, rather than a performance issue



## Explaining difference between personnel regulations and ratings distribution

**A high percentage of high ratings is a function of the stability and quality of the workforce.**

- “I don’t think Exceptional employees in Montgomery County are rare.”
- “...it is not surprising that the distribution would skew toward the top two performance ratings. We should consider that as a positive indicator of the level of people hired...”
- “This is a common problem in an organization that has a very stable, tenured workforce. If an organization has a limited succession planning program, long-tenured employees can be at the top of their position category, with no “next step”. As such, these employees tend to be the departmental experts and are fully loaded with historical facts about processes and production that makes them achieve that highest rating.”
- “Frankly, it is not surprising to me that a large portion of our workforce performs above and beyond the usual. I think it is based in expectations of our workforce, management’s expectations of employees.”
- “Although I agree with the notion that successful rating is appropriate for most employees, however, if our rating skews toward the top two ratings for the majority, to me that’s an indication that Montgomery County has many outstanding employees.”



*Source: Survey of Department Directors on employee performance ratings system*

## Explaining difference between personnel regulations and ratings distribution

**A successful rating is perceived as average performance and just doing what is strictly required by employee's job definition.**

- “Successful is a C.”
- “There is not common acceptance by employees or supervisors that ‘satisfactory’ is appropriate for most employees. Satisfactory is considered failure. “
- “We have given no real value and rewards to the successful category.”
- “Because we live in Lake Wobegon where everyone is above average. It is just classic grading on the curve.”
- “I think most supervisors want to give an employee who is doing an excellent job, an excellent rating. The rating of “highly successful” just doesn’t sound like an excellent rating, it sounds more like a grade of ‘B’ rather than ‘A’.”
- “Universally, “successful” is regarded as average at best since “does not meet expectations” is viewed as the last step before dismissal.”
- “Despite OHR’s on-going efforts to dispel the culturally ingrained link to the school grade system, it still persists...Naturally, employees are more accepting of a B grade than a C. “



Source: Survey of Department Directors on employee performance ratings system

## Explaining difference between personnel regulations and ratings distribution

**This is an interpersonal issue related to maintaining the manager-employee relationship.**

- “Supervisors do not want to de-motivate a good employee with a lower rating”
- “Supervisors work closely on a daily basis with their subordinates. Whatever ratings they give their employees they will have to live with for the next year...To avoid confrontation and bad feelings, sometimes managers will opt for a higher rating in the case of a “borderline” case rather than deal with a disgruntled employee for the next year. “
- “Most managers do not want the headache of having disgruntled employees and just Satisfactory will get you disgruntled employees. So, fair or not you just bite the bullet and give them "Highly Successful" when they are really just average.”
- “What incentive is there for managers to tell someone they are only “successful” verse “exceptional”? It is easier to say they are doing a great job and the perception from many managers is that a bad review is more likely to de-motivate an employee than motivate them. “
- “It is a ‘path of least resistance’ approach when evaluating employees who are solid performers. In the public system, there is greater downside risk and a lot more work involved to evaluate someone below those two categories than if you placed them within.”



*Source: Survey of Department Directors on employee performance ratings system*



# Explaining difference between personnel regulations and ratings distribution

**This is a compensation issue, rather than a performance issue.**

- “Successful has no compensation attached”
- “Performance awards put pressure on manager to inflate ratings to grant awards out of fear of losing an employee.”
- “This is really a compensation issue rather than a performance issue a majority of the time. It is often used to address perceived pay inequity, to keep or place managers on par with staff that they supervise who are in the Union.”
- “Rating employees at the two top levels justifies awarding the employee with the highest possible salary increase. Subjectively, we understand that exceptional cannot occur in all categories so the ratings go back and forth between that and ‘highly successful.’”
- “[G]enerally evaluations tend to be more skewed toward Exceptional and Highly Successful because we have not given real value and rewards to the successful category...All the incentives and rewards for doing a job well consistently start at the highly successful and exceptional level.”
- “There are few ‘rewards’ that can be provided to employees who are performing well. Therefore, rating someone higher than appropriate becomes one way of providing a type of reward.”

*Source: Survey of Department Directors on employee performance ratings system*



## Shortcomings of Performance-based Compensation

- Percentage of pay difference between high and low performers does not encourage improved performance
- Merit Pay focuses on compensation and not on improved performance
- Discussions between manager and employee are on not receiving or receiving a lower amount of pay, and not on developmental issues
- Employees get defensive since the rater is taking something away from them
- Employees often set lower goals so they can be achieved to receive additional pay

**Money is so closely tied in with employee performance evaluation that it seems to have taken over the performance management process.**



Source: Office of Human Resources

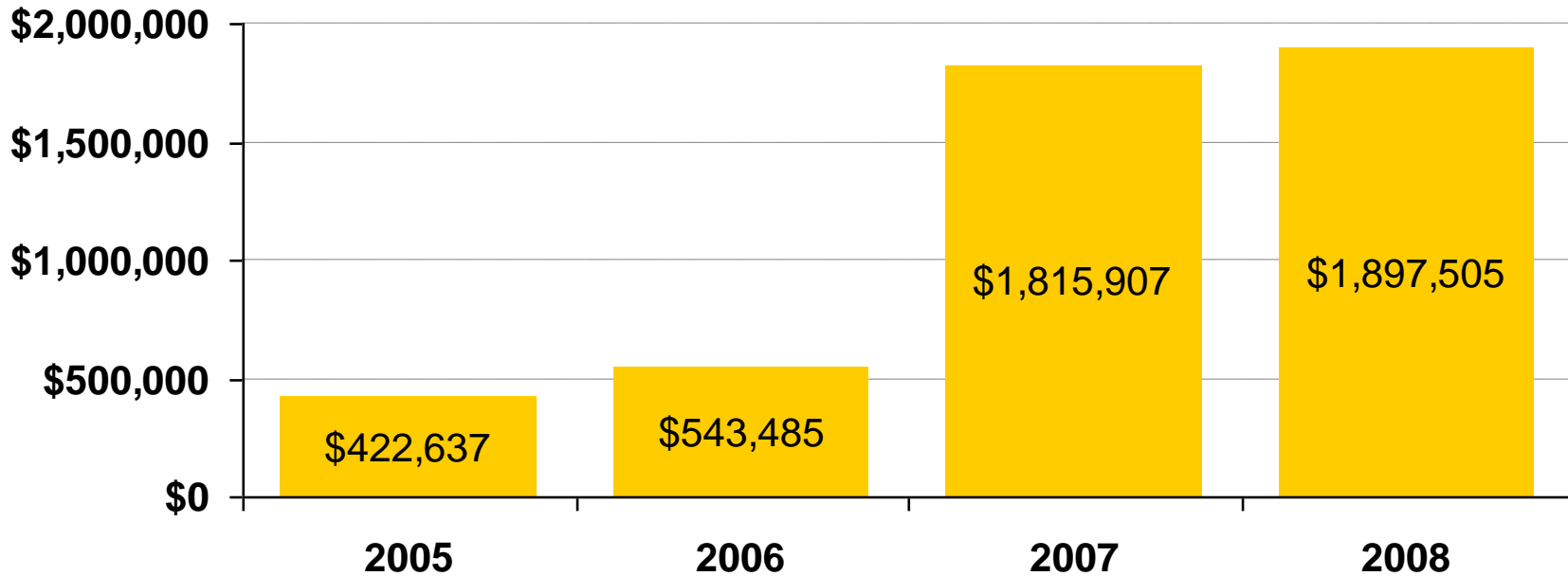
# Performance-based Pay: Lessons Learned

- Performance-related pay has often failed to trigger expected intermediate changes in employee perceptions necessary to change motivation.
- The type of public service involved and the context in which the pay for performance system operates, tend to moderate the effectiveness of pay for performance systems. Discussions between manager and employee are on not receiving or receiving a lower amount of pay, and not on developmental issues.
- Merit Pay may have a more positive effect at the lower levels of an organization, where job responsibilities are less ambiguous.
- Failures in pay-for-performance systems were linked to poor implementation, and also to institutional differences between public and private sectors such as transparency, budget, and stewardship.
- “Don’t Despair”: Public sector motivation theory and self-determination theory may be better levers for improving performance than expectancy or reinforcement theory.
- Don’t adopt pay-for-performance systems simply because other jurisdictions are doing so.



Source: Office of Human Resources

## Performance-based Compensation FY 2005 – FY 2008



**Beginning in FY06, General Salary Schedule employees were eligible for performance-based compensation. The 2007 increase can be partially attributed to a retroactive payout for 2006.**



*Note: This includes payroll codes: MRT, MR2, and MR3.*

## Performance-based Compensation Benchmark Jurisdictions

County	Policy
<b>Montgomery County</b>	General Wage Adjustment (GWA); service increment/longevity and/or performance-based pay
<b>Fairfax County</b>	Pay-for-Performance Increase: 0 – 6% (avg. = 4%) Total cost for FY09: \$12.8 million Point system based on three-part section of goals
<b>Prince William County</b>	Merit increase only: 3% + 1-2% lump-sum; No additional GWA in FY09
<b>City of Alexandria</b>	Sliding scale merit increase between 2.3 – 5% for employees receiving “satisfactory” rating or above on 5-point scale
<b>MNCPPC</b>	3.5% performance increment for employees receiving “satisfactory” rating or above on 5-point scale; 3.25% additional GWA
<b>Baltimore City</b>	Up to 2.5% merit increase every 18 months for “consistently high quality” management and professional staff
<b>Federal Government</b>	Experience with performance-based pay yielded mixed results

**There are a range of performance-based pay systems in place that either stand-alone or are combined in some way with longevity or other factors.**



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## Suggested Solutions

How would you change the employee performance evaluation process for non-represented employees in order to better manage employee performance?

### Perception of Successful

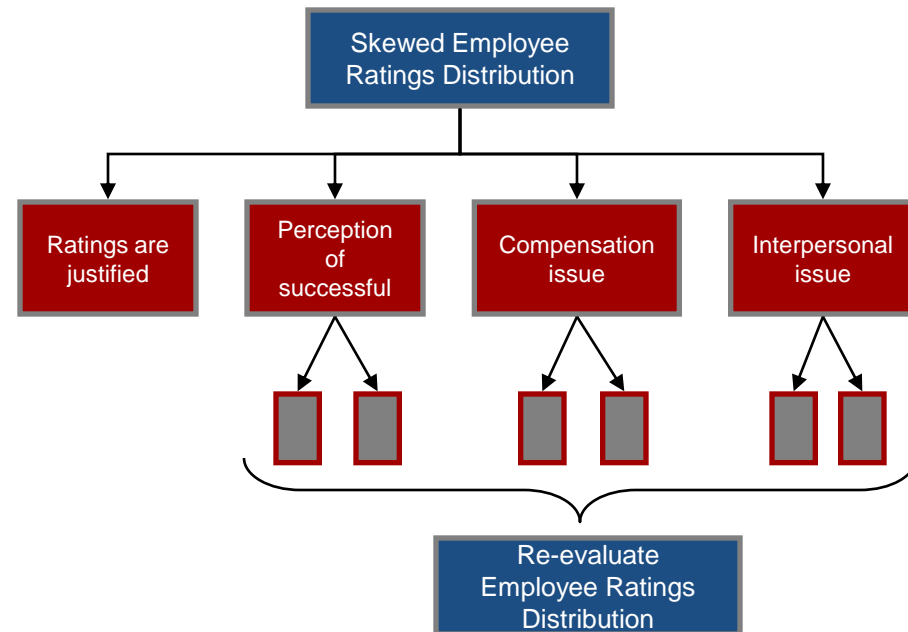
- Increase education for managers and employees
- Provide non-monetary reward to successful employees

### Compensation issue

- Adjust performance-based compensation

### Interpersonal issue

- Increase accountability/oversight of management for ratings distribution
- Provide stricter guidelines on % of employees in each category



The types of solutions chosen to pursue largely depend on the reason for the skewed distribution.



## Suggested Solutions

**Increase education on how to evaluate employees, including the meanings of ratings categories.**

- “[There] needs to be an educational campaign among employees and supervisors on the meaning of the ratings and the fact that exceptional is not the norm.”
- “There was more training on the electronic system than the actual evaluation system, particularly when one system doesn’t necessarily fit all...I would recommend doing some retraining...I think organizing groups of managers that evaluate like employees and doing smaller group training would be useful. And, again, the electronic system merited no training – but, the actual core evaluation system merited a lot.”
- “Long term, I would begin to create a culture within county government that redefines the various rating categories...There needs to be specific benchmarks tied to measurements and the attainment of those benchmarks tied directly to rewards. The rating of Highly successful and Exceptional should relate to higher levels of work and production in the same job environment but with benchmarks who attainment clearly overwhelm expectations and the organizational impact is obvious and again measurable.”



*Source: Survey of Department Directors on employee performance ratings system*



## Suggested Solutions

**Provide non-monetary rewards to successful employees.**

- “Perhaps we could expand upon our current award program or provide rewards based upon specific accomplishments.”
- “I would give greater weight and appropriate rewards to successful work.”
- “[E]nhance programs to award specific instances of extraordinary performance.”



*Source: Survey of Department Directors on employee performance ratings system*

## Suggested Solutions

### Increase Departmental and manager accountability for employee ratings.

- “Consider requiring raters to provide specific examples or documentation to justify the highest two categories.”
- “Require supervisors to clearly document on writing performance ratings does not meet and or exceptional ratings.”
- “Hold Department heads accountable for justifying awards for exceptional employees.”
- “[W]hy not permit a 4 or 5 grade evaluation scale for all employees, allowing those who are truly excellent to receive the highest rating, and the reserve the rating of “Exceptional” for a different format, requiring a written explanation of why this employee is being rated at that level? That way, every employee can try to achieve the highest possible performance evaluation (It would be possible to “be an A student”), while still permitting another avenue for recognizing the truly heroic performances of employees who have done something truly extraordinary.”
- “Further, the intended rarity of the “exceptional” rating should be emphasized to raters and, somehow, challenged when used in abundance. Dual raters, or using 360 reviews more would be helpful.”



Source: Survey of Department Directors on employee performance ratings system

## Suggested Solutions

### Adjust performance-based compensation.

- “I think the band is too small. 10% rather than 6% is reasonable.”
- “Also, the control band needs to be removed to simplify the system and enhance the predictability.”
- “There needs to be greater certainty about performance and reward. For MLS employees, there is too much variability and uncertainty between what their rating is and what their pay for performance award will be. Employees will respond to economic incentives, but there has to be predictability between the performance and the incentive for it to be effective. The pay increase for a rating needs to be fixed to a particular rating (e.g. 2% for Successful and 6% for Exceptional). Currently it varies greatly by supervisors within a department and across departments.”
- “The service increment/merit pay needs to be eliminated and replaced with pay for performance.”
- “More performance based compensation. Eliminate Steps entirely and allow all compensation above COLA to be provided as performance based raises/bonuses. I’d rather get an allotment of funding and distribute across the agency based on the work done. If steps average out to 3.5 percent, I’d rather the flexibility to give some a 7% (5% raise and 2% bonus) and others zero. This approach would prevent the departments where everyone is “exceptional” from giving them all 7% raises...You only have so much money to go around.”



Source: Survey of Department Directors on employee performance ratings system

## Suggested Solutions

**Provide stricter guidelines for the percentage of employees that should fall into each category.**

- “Limit the number of people in a grouping for large departments.”
- “Consider limiting the top 2 categories to a specific percentage of the total number of employees supervised by each manager.”
- “Set a general max on percentage of exceptional ratings in a department.”
- “...People need to fit rating within guideline %s and need written (and approved) waiver to go beyond guidelines.”
- “Give managers a dollar amount to manage and create a pool for exceptional service for the waivers in the case of high performing agencies. “



*Source: Survey of Department Directors on employee performance ratings system*

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# Moving Forward

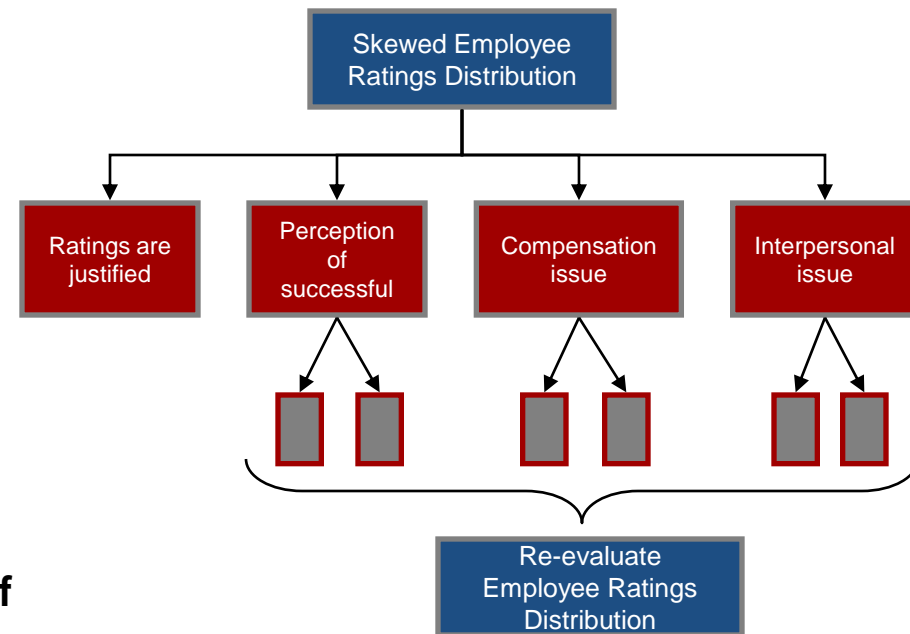
- **Montgomery County is not unique in that its pay-for-performance system is not working as promised**
- **Introducing GSS employees into the pool has shown a tendency by MLS to replicate the concerns about rating inflation**
- **Need to look at the issue holistically**
  - Validity and reliability of performance evaluation instrument
  - Perception of fairness and equity by those being rated
  - Top management's expectation of a performance evaluation and a pay-for-performance system
- **Issues of motivation**
  - Are the payouts large enough to motivate?
  - How to address intrinsically motivated employees—public service motivation?
- **Do managers believe that the entire system adds value?**
- **How do we measure outputs?**
  - Role for CountyStat



Source: Office of Human Resources

# Moving Forward

- **Goals of performance management and performance-based compensation**
  - To improve government productivity through evaluation and feedback to employees
  - To provide incentives to employees to meet and exceed expectations
- **There are a range of explanations which could result in a disconnect between performance management goals and operational realities**
- **To respond to those issues, Directors have suggested a spectrum of solutions involving varying degrees of required change, oversight and resources**



**Whatever combination of solutions are implemented will require a re-evaluation of the employee ratings distribution to determine the intended effect was achieved.**



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## Wrap-Up

- **Confirmation of follow-up items**
- **Time frame for next meeting**

